

In the Claims:

Amend claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19, cancel claim 23 and add claims 24 to 27 such that the claim set reads as follows:

1. (currently amended) A bag presenter apparatus for use to present a bag for filling by a packaging machine, the bag including a first side panel and an opposite side panel and the packaging machine having a filling station including a filling chute and a filled bag conveyor, the bag presenter apparatus comprising: a bag gripper for holding the bag to be filled by the packaging machine relative to the filling chute of the packaging machine such that materials from the chute can be introduced to the bag, the bag gripper operable to hold the bag to be filled without wicket pins also engaging the bag and the bag gripper configurable to hold the first side panel of the bag and in a position conducive to engagement of the bag by the filled bag conveyor of the packaging machine.
2. (original) The bag presenter apparatus of claim 1 being a stand-alone unit and being mountable relative to the filling chute of a wicketed bag-packaging machine.
3. (currently amended) The bag presenter apparatus of claim 1 being a stand-alone unit positionable ~~in the wicket pin area~~ below the filling chute of the bag-packaging machine when ~~the~~ any wicket pins have been moved out of the way.
4. (currently amended) The bag presenter apparatus of claim 1 wherein the bag gripper ~~is configurable~~ includes a pair of spaced apart gripping fingers positioned to hold the bag at two positions such that the filled ~~back~~ bag conveyor can engage the bag for conveyance in a manner substantially similar to a ~~bag held by wicket pins~~ wicketed bag holding configuration.

5. (original) The bag presenter apparatus of claim 1 wherein the bag gripper includes a pair of spaced apart gripping pinchers selected to grip a first side panel of the bag to be filled at two spaced apart fixed points.
6. (currently amended) The bag presenter apparatus of claim 1 wherein the bag presenter moves ~~[[a]]~~ the bag to be filled along a substantially uniform direction from a bag supply area to the bag gripper.
7. (original) The bag presenter apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a conveyor for moving the bag from a supply area toward the bag gripper, the conveyor including a belt and a bag orientating device acting relative to the belt to ensure appropriate bag orientation in the conveyor.
8. (currently amended) The bag presenter of claim ~~[[1]]~~ 7 wherein the bag orientating device includes a stop mechanism, selected to stop advancement of ~~[[a]]~~ the bag to be filled moved by the belt and to orient the bag relative to the belt direction of travel.
9. (currently amended) The bag presenter of claim 8 wherein the stop mechanism is movable into and out of an operable position to stop advancement of ~~[[a]]~~ the bag to be filled.
10. (original) The bag presenter of claim 9 wherein the stop mechanism can be driven to extend through and to retract from, a drive surface plane defined by the surface of the belt.
11. (currently amended) The bag presenter of claim 1, further comprising a conveyor for moving the bag from a supply area toward the bag gripper, the conveyor ~~further~~ comprising a bag opening mechanism including engaging devices selected to engage the side panels of the bag and pull them apart.
12. (original) The bag presenter of claim 11 wherein the bag opening mechanism includes a sensor for detecting a non-opening bag.

- 13.(currently amended) The bag presenter of claim 1 further comprising a conveyor for moving the bag from a supply area toward the bag gripper and a bag handler for carrying [[a]] the bag from the conveyor to the gripper.
- 14.(original) The bag presenter of claim 13 wherein the conveyor is selected to move a subsequent bag into position for moving to the gripper when the bag handler is carrying a first bag from the conveyor to the gripper.
- 15.(currently amended) The bag presenter of claim [[8]] 13 wherein the bag handler is an arm moveable between the conveyor and the gripper and moves to pull the bag upwardly into position for engagement by the gripper.
- 16.(currently amended) The bag presenter of claim 1 further comprising a bag feeder for moving a bottom bag from ~~the a bag supply to the conveyor~~ toward the bag gripper.
- 17.(currently amended) The bag presenter of claim [[1]] 7 wherein the conveyor is expandable to adjust for various bag widths.
- 18.(currently amended) A bag presenter for moving a bag from a bag supply to a packaging machine filling station, the bag presenter comprising: a bag supply holding area, a gripper for holding a bag in the filling station and a bag handler for moving the bag from the holding area toward the gripper, the bag handler including a bag opening mechanism and a means for maintaining a bag in an opened configuration once opened, the means for maintaining the bag in an opened configuration includes a gripping device including a first jaw and a second jaw selected to grip one side panel of the bag by pinching it between the first part and the second part with the first part inserted between the one side panel and an opposite side panel of the bag tending to hold the side panels apart.
- 19.(currently amended) The bag presenter of claim 18 wherein the bag handler further ~~comprising~~ comprises a bag opening mechanism including engaging devices selected to engage the side panels of a bag and pull them apart.

20. (original) The bag presenter of claim 19 wherein the bag opening mechanism includes a sensor for detecting a non-opening bag.
21. (original) The bag presenter of claim 18 wherein at least one of the bag opening mechanism or the means for maintaining a bag in an opened configuration comprises an air jet device for directing a jet of air into the bag.
22. (original) The bag presenter of claim 21 wherein the air jet device is mounted on a bag-engaging device.
23. (cancelled)
24. (newly added) A bag presenter apparatus for use to present a bag for filling by a packaging machine, the bag including a first side panel and an opposite side panel and the packaging machine having a filling station including a filling chute and a filled bag conveyor, the bag presenter apparatus comprising: a bag gripper for holding the bag to be filled by the packaging machine relative to the filling chute of the packaging machine such that materials from the chute can be introduced to the bag and the bag gripper configurable to hold the first side panel of the bag and in a position conducive to engagement of the bag by the filled bag conveyor of the packaging machine and a conveyor for moving the bag from a supply area toward the bag gripper, the conveyor including a belt and a bag orientating device acting relative to the belt to ensure appropriate bag orientation in the conveyor.
25. (newly added) The bag presenter of claim 24 wherein the bag orientating device includes a stop mechanism, selected to stop advancement of a bag moved by the belt and to orient the bag relative to the belt direction of travel.
26. (newly added) The bag presenter of claim 25 wherein the stop mechanism is movable into and out of an operable position to stop advancement of a bag.

27.(newly added) The bag presenter of claim 26 wherein the stop mechanism can be driven to extend through and to retract from, a drive surface plane defined by the surface of the belt.

In the Drawings:

A replacement drawing sheet containing Figure 3 is enclosed for review and insertion, if approved by the Examiner.